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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 USNATO 000078

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SUBJECT: DAS KRAMER GIVES NATO ALLIES READOUT ON US-RUSSIA
CFE TALKS

Classified By: A/DCM W.S. Reid for reasons 1.4 (b) anbd (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 22, Deputy Assistant Secretary David Kramer briefed NATO Allies in Brussels on Assistant Secretary Fried's February 19 meeting with Russian Deputy

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Foreign Minister and Disarmament Director Antonov regarding the CFE Parallel Actions Package. Kramer reported that the latest round of bilateral negotiations was constructive and businesslike, but there was little progress on the four primary issues) Georgia, Moldova, the Flank regime, and a NATO collective ceiling. He said that the U.S. has been flexible, positive, and forward leaning, but that approach has not been met with reciprocity from the Russians. Antonov had proposed to meet with A/S Fried again before Bucharest, and the sides were working to schedule a session. Kramer underscored that Russia,s &suspension8 has made it harder to find solutions on CFE, stressed the importance of unity, and noted that NATO adherence to the Treaty, without Russian implementation, is likely not viable over the longer-term. Allies appreciated the readout. Their questions focused primarily on the impact of the ongoing CFE negotiations on the NATO Bucharest Summit. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) At a February 22 meeting of NATO Deputy Permanent Representatives DAS Kramer briefed Allies on A/S Fried's February 19 meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and Disarmament Director Antonov, the first with the Russians since the OSCE Madrid Ministerial and Russia's December 2007 "suspension" of its CFE implementation. The meeting lasted over 3 hours. Kramer described the Fried-Antonov channel as the primary channel for reaching agreement on a package to end the current CFE impasse, and that both sides agreed to meet again in March. Kramer's talking points are included in paragraph 11.

Negotiations Aimed at Reaching Agreement

¶3. (C) Kramer recalled that the overall objective of the talks with the Russians is a package agreement on CFE that would lead to Allies, ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty and Russia,s fulfillment of remaining Istanbul commitments. The Parallel Actions Package remains on the table and the U.S. is ready to work to find a way forward on that basis. Kramer said the U.S. continues to emphasize to the Russians that these discussions must not seek to rewrite the Adapted

Treaty, e.g., by reopening the flank regime. Commenting on the extensive discussion on Moldova and Georgia, he noted that the proposal on the table is as far as the U.S. is prepared to go. However, the U.S. (and Russia) agreed to re-look at the text, and the U.S. agreed to discuss the Georgia text with Tbilisi. He labeled the meeting on February 19 as constructive, though the Russian position did not show any forward movement and may have slipped back with regard to the Istanbul Commitments. He stated to Allies a number of times that it is very important that engagement with the Russians continue in a professional, businesslike fashion. He said that there were a number of "secondary" issues that seem close to resolution, or likely to be resolved once the main issues are settled. This was not so much a sign of Russian flexibility as a reflection of the character of the issues.

Russians Caught Off-Guard?

14. (C) The Russians seemed to be surprised during the February 19 negotiations, Kramer reported, when the U.S. stated that Russia's suspension of its Treaty implementation on December 12 makes it harder to find solutions on CFE, and that Allies' adherence to the Treaty may not continue indefinitely. Kramer felt that the Russians were "caught off-guard," indicating to him that they may not have fully thought through the consequences of their actions. Antonov did mention that Russia had no plans to withdraw from CFE.

Allies' Questions

USNATO 00000078 002 OF 004

15. (C) Allies focused on the implications of the CFE negotiations for the NATO Bucharest Summit in April, and sought DAS Kramer's advice on dealing with President Putin in Bucharest. The Portuguese went so far as to ask, "What kinds of bombs could Putin drop in Bucharest?" In response, Kramer reemphasized that Allies need to continue engaging the Russians in a constructive and businesslike way. He urged Allies to stay united and to remain focused on NATO's objectives, and proceed on what is in the Alliance's best interest. At Bucharest, he said that Allies may have to "agree to disagree" with the Russians on a number of issues. Kramer strongly urged "Allies to think about how best to manage disagreement with Russia during the Summit."

16. (C) Kramer continued by saying he did not expect any breakthroughs with the Russians before Bucharest on CFE, but that U/S John Rood is meeting with them in Budapest on missile defense, and that we expected another bilateral meeting on CFE in March. He expected that CFE would inevitably be on the agenda at the NATO-Russia Council meeting at the Summit. He summarized by saying, "While there are opportunities to make substantial progress in the negotiations before the Summit, don't get your hopes up."

17. (C) Kramer said that he hopes President Putin is coming to the Summit to be constructive and to put some new ideas on the table, but that he cannot rule out that Putin is coming to "put on a show" or to "drop a bomb (figuratively)." He told Allies that one theory purports that Putin is coming to the Summit to restrict Allies' actions, especially on issues like offering a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia. The Summit will be one month after Russian elections and one month before the new President takes office) Kramer made clear his opinion that no outcome other than Medvedev winning the Presidency is possible) and further opined that Putin is trying to regain the political spotlight in Russia while Medvedev seems to be trying to catch up. In response to a question from Italy, Kramer highlighted Russian cooperation on Afghanistan as a potential deliverable for

Bucharest, as Russia and Allies share many similar concerns. Perhaps on issues like Missile Defense and the post-START arrangements Allies could find common ground with Russia, he speculated.

Flank Regime

18. (C) Allies asked several questions probing for signs of Russian flexibility on the flank regime. Kramer replied that the Russians have not been totally rational on this issue, but they have been more than clear: the flank regime would apply to Allies, not to Russia. Even President Putin has stated this position, which has served to tie the hands of the Russian negotiators. Kramer responded to a question from Spain by saying that de-linking the flank issue from the overall agreement is not a good approach for Allies to take. He concluded by saying that if Russia had an issue with the flank regime, they should not have ratified the Adapted Treaty.

Georgia

19. (C) The Lithuanians asked about the way forward with Russia regarding Georgia, and said that they could not foresee any future Russian concessions. DAS Kramer agreed with their assessment and responded that Georgia had agreed to move forward with ratification of the Adapted Treaty based on Russian &documentary transfer8 of the Gudauta base from Russia to Georgia. Russia will continue to insist on Georgia,s explicitly granting the Russian forces the right to use the Gudauta military facility; the Georgians cannot publicly agree to this for political reasons. Kramer pointed out that, compared to Akhalkalaki and Batumi, Gudauta is an insignificant and minor base, and letting it impede a CFE solution indicates a lack of political will in Moscow to wrap up the issue. In fact, making progress on Gudauta will achieve a common goal) ratification of the Adapted treaty - and Georgia/Russia relations in general.

USNATO 00000078 003 OF 004

Provisional Application

110. (C) Asked what language the Russians were willing to accept on provisional application of the Adapted Treaty, Kramer said that provisional application was only briefly touched upon at the February 19 meeting and it is not clear exactly what language Russia will accept. Antonov repeated the Russian position that they would like the Adapted Treaty provisionally applied 12 months after agreement on the parallel actions plan. A/S Fried countered that for the U.S. and many Allies, provisional application is impossible before Parliaments have ratified. While the Russians appeared to note this point, the discussion did not go further.

Talking Points

111. (C) Following are cleared talking points on the meeting that were shared orally with Allies February 21; DAS Kramer also drew on these in his comments.

Background: On February 19, Assistant Secretary Fried and Russian MFA Disarmament Director Antonov conducted the latest round of bilateral negotiations on the CFE Parallel Actions Package. Discussion was non-polemical and businesslike, but there was little progress on the four primary issues) Georgia, Moldova, the flank regime, and a NATO collective ceiling.

- A/S Fried and Director Antonov held consultations on the Parallel Actions Package in Washington, the first since Russia,s December 2007 &suspension8 of its CFE implementation. The meeting lasted more than three hours and covered the full range of CFE issues. The tone was constructive throughout.

- The Russian team noted) and we would agree) that some of the (secondary) issues on the table seem close to resolution. We also agreed that more time is needed on other issues. A/S Fried and Antonov agreed to continue to meet and, in particular, to meet in March -- i.e., before Bucharest) to follow up.

- We,ll provide a more detailed readout at the HLTF. A few notable points:

- At this meeting there was no movement on four key issues) Russia,s desire to eliminate the flank regime for Russia while retaining it for all other flank countries, their push for a collective ceiling for NATO, and positions on Moldova and Georgia.

- The Russians mentioned Kosovo several times in the meeting, particularly with reference to Georgia and Moldova. Regarding Moldova and Georgia the Russians reiterated their old position that CFE and the Istanbul commitments are not related; A/S Fried underscored that Moldova and Georgia had been part of the package from the beginning, and that those countries had been creative and helpful. The Russian side indicated it wanted to continue its current presence in both countries, essentially without change, but agreed to continue discussions. We explained that simply continuing the status quo was not acceptable and that Russia should find a way, as Moldova and Georgia have offered by supporting our proposal, to eliminate the obstacles to ratification of Adapted CFE by all 30 States.

- The U.S. underscored that Russia,s &suspension8 had made it harder to find solutions on CFE, and for Allies to consider beginning the ratification process. We noted that the current anomalous situation, with NATO implementing the Treaty and Russia not, was not viable over the longer-term.

- In response to U.S. questions about Russian thinking on the way forward, Antonov dismissed &rumors8 that Russia might take some further step, like withdrawing from the Treaty. (Note: Antonov made this comment in response to a question about the status of Russia,s position, presented at the CFE Extraordinary Conference in June 2007, that Adapted CFE should be provisionally applied or in force by the end of

USNATO 00000078 004 OF 004

June 2008.)

12. (U) DAS Kramer has cleared this message.
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